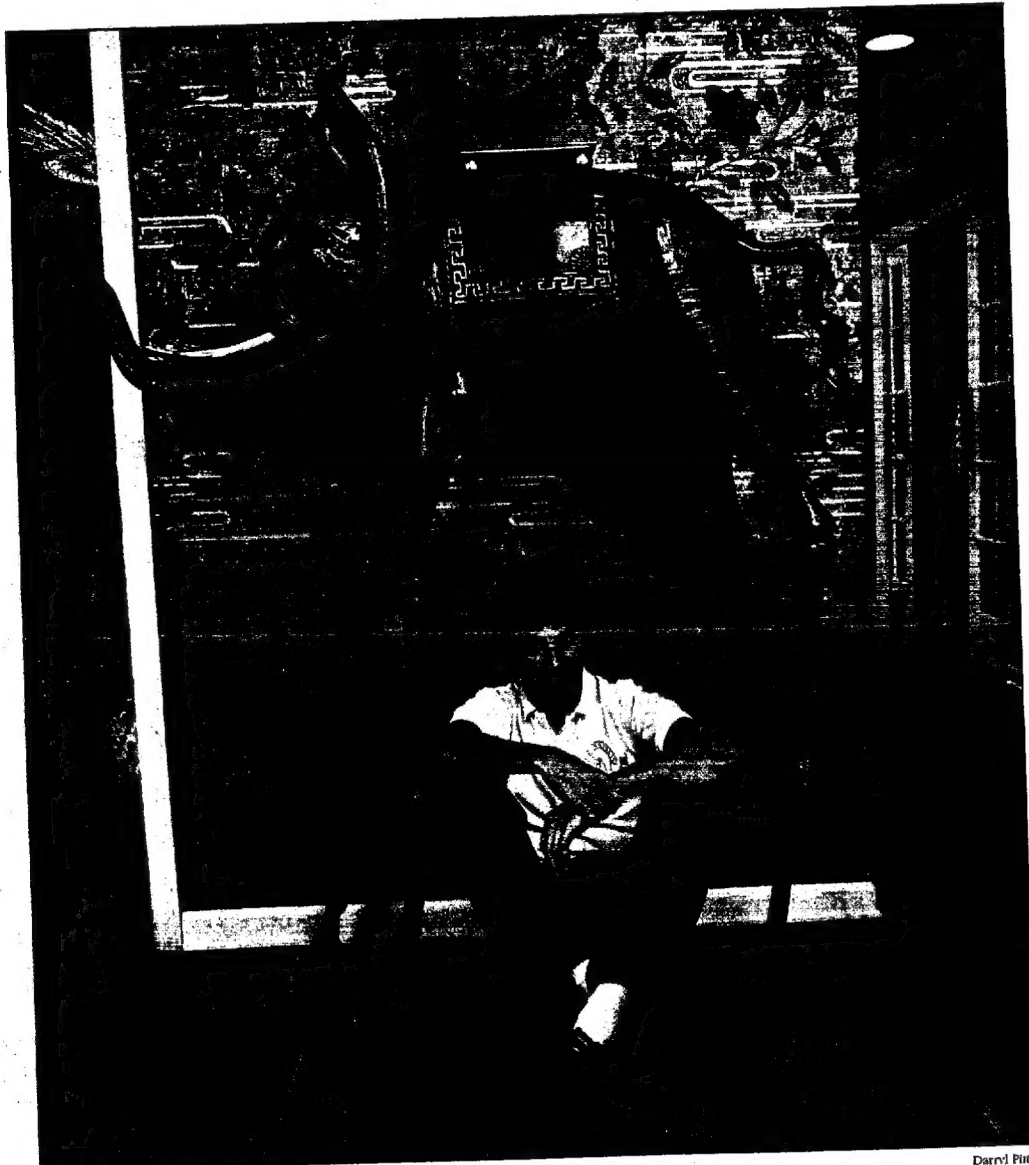


*Madame Sosostreis, famous clairvoyante,
Had a bad cold, nevertheless. . . .*
—T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

Closing the psychic gap



Israeli mentalist Uri Geller

Darryl Pitt

By James Cook

CLAIRVOYANT, TELEPATHIST, psychokineticist, Uri Geller has a bad cold himself and warns you not to come too close. He's a tall, lean man, handsome in the manner of an El Greco grandee or one of those male models he once was, with dark wavy hair, gentle brown eyes and a hawk nose.

An Israeli by birth, Geller has been perfecting his psychic powers since he first bent a soup spoon at age 4 and told his mother he didn't know his own psychic strength. These days, at 37, on the theater and television circuits, he does a lot more. He can bend keys and nails as well as spoons, he can perceive and transmit images and, when he puts his mind to it, he claims he can even erase computer tapes.

Which, if so, makes Geller's talents fit for a bit more than parlor games. In fact, the really big opportunity these days is in business. "Big businesses," he says, "are beginning to listen to people who think they can deliver something with their sixth senses." Consider the possibilities. What if some enterprising outsider were to hire a psychic to abscond with the secrets of IBM's new 1,000K RAM chip? Or if a Boone Pickens had the ability to compel a Gulf or a Cities Service to bow to the terms of his latest merger offer? What if he knows what the stock market or the gold market or the bond market will do next week, next month, or next year?

Don't laugh. Don't turn the page too quickly. This may be a lot of nonsense. On the other hand, President Carter was reported to have been worried enough about the possibilities of psychic warfare to order an investigation of Russian psychic research activities some years ago. The CIA is said to have spent \$6 million on it. Even Congress asked the Congressional Research Service to look into the subject 2 year ago.

Geller likes to talk about a psychic gap, as in missile gap. He believes the Russians may be marshaling cadres of people like himself with the capacity for working high-powered intercontinental mischief—erasing computer tapes at a 10,000-mile remove, for example. "If that happens," Geller says, "the American system is finished, it'd crumple, because everything is on computers: automatic missiles, code systems. I mean everything."

And when you in effect say to him, "If you're so smart, how come you're not rich?" Geller responds calmly, in that soft Israeli accent of his, that he is, very rich. "I'm not in the hundreds of millions, but I am very happy with what I have. I don't need any more. For what you need to live a good life, there is no difference between \$15 million and \$100 million."

When he was poor, and younger,

Somebody once asked Golda Meir what she saw for the future of Israel, and she said, "Don't ask me, ask Uri Geller." That may have been a joke, but Edgar Mitchell and John Tishman weren't joking when they persuaded Geller to come to the U.S.

Geller found himself admiring the way the very rich lived and decided that one day he was going to make a lot of money himself. And those powers of his paved the way. He made more than 800 appearances in Israel demonstrating his powers. For the past decade he has been going around the world bending spoons, nails and the like and generally stirring astonishment, conviction and disbelief wherever he goes.

Somebody once asked Golda Meir what she saw for the future of Israel, and she said, "Don't ask me, ask Uri Geller." That may have been a joke, but astronaut Edgar Mitchell and John Tishman, chairman of Tishman Realty & Construction Co., weren't joking a decade ago when they persuaded Geller to come to the U.S., where Stanford Research Institute gave him a going over. "They wanted me to do strange things like transmission of thoughts, remote viewing, erasing computer tapes, which I can do."

But it was Val Duncan, the late chairman of Britain's Rio Tinto Zinc Corp., that made him see the possibilities business could offer. Duncan tested Geller's ability to find minerals on Majorca and later put him in

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Darryl Pitt

Psychic Geller
A secret Fellini or Yves St. Laurent.

touch with the chairman of South Africa's Anglo-Transvaal mining company. The chairman spread out a map and said, "Tell me what you feel." Geller said, "I feel something here," and years later, Geller says, the company found coal on the spot. "That's when I learned I could do this for very big companies and profit myself also. For seven years I have been doing this, and nobody knows anything about it."

Several oil companies, for example, hired him to do some exploration. Acting as a sort of airborne divining rod, Geller targeted 11 prospects, 4 of which, he says, proved out. Geller doesn't charge fees, he explains. He relies on people to pay what his service is worth, in this case a percentage royalty. "It's a very little percentage," he says, "but in oil a little is a lot."

Which companies he has worked for Geller won't say. "They do not want their name to be linked to the psychic, to the paranormal." His only really public venture to date is his success in bringing together Japan's Aoki Corp. and the U.S.' Tishman Realty in a \$500 million hotel, condominium, shopping development near Disney World in Florida. Both John Aoki and John Tishman were personal friends, but Geller claims to be more than a mere go-between. "My role is, I predict the success of the venture." That's where the power

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lies, in being able to predict the future success.

Geller has a number of business ventures of his own on the fire. Among them: a chain of Uri Geller fast health-food restaurants in partnership with Aoki, a movie to be directed by Federico Fellini based on his own life story ("A \$100 million grosser, because I know how to do it the right way"); a line of gold costume jewelry with the Geller bent nail motif, perhaps a perfume, in partnership with H. Stern of Brazil.

Listening to him talk, it's difficult sometimes to see wherein he differs from any other marriage broker, moviemaker, fashion designer or what have you, who has a sense of what the public will want. Geller puts it differently. He thinks these people are successful in what they do because they have some of what he possesses. "Fel-

There are all kinds of ways of organizing reality, and there's no reason ESP should not sometimes be as effective as econometric models or sunspots, stars, long waves, entrails or the flights of birds in predicting the shape of things to come.

lini and St. Laurent and Pierre Cardin, they all have the power. I made it very, very secretly, without anyone knowing, and I think I am ready to come out and have my name known. I would like to create health-food restaurants, art pieces. I think we all have this power, and some day it's going to be explained."

And why not? There are all kinds of ways of organizing reality, and even the most unlikely often work with varying degrees of success in particular times or situations. There is no reason that ESP should not sometimes be at least as effective as econometric models or sunspots, stars, long waves, entrails or the flights of birds in predicting the shape of things to come.

Geller likes to maintain his ambiguity, half charlatan, half seer, all showman. "No one really knows if I am real or not," he says. But having been shot once in an assassination attempt—he shows you the scars—he tells you confidentially that if people ever really believed he had the power he claims, he'd have been dead by now. "Whoever has people with such powers," he says, "has an incredible weapon. Incredible weapon." ■

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